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UNCLAS ALGIERS 001376

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [LE](#) [IS](#) [AG](#)
SUBJECT: ALGERIAN COMMITTEE OF SOLIDARITY AND SUPPORT FOR
THE PALESTINIAN AND LEBANESE PEOPLES PRESENTS PETITION TO
CHARGE D'AFFAIRES

U.S. POSITION INCONSISTENT WITH U.S.
SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

¶1. Vice President of the Conseil de la Nation (Senate) Zohra Bitat; Senator Saida Benhabyles; Female Executives NGO President Aicha Kouadri; and General Union of Students President Nabil Yahoui called July 24 on the Charge d'Affaires to present a petition calling on the United States to take steps to stop the ongoing bloodshed in the Middle East. Bitat told Charge, who was accompanied by PolEc Chief, that the delegation represented the Algerian people through a collaborative effort of different civic groups and associations. Expressing their respect for the great democracy that is the United States, the signers of the petition asked Charge to pass their message directly to President Bush. The delegation noted that it shared a copy of the petition with the International Federation of Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International.

¶2. The delegation told Charge that the Algerian people understood from their own history the barbaric consequences of terrorism. The Algerian people, being frank and open, could not remain silent in face of the events they see unfolding on their television screens. Knowing that the U.S. is a country that respects human rights and supports freedom and justice around the world, the supporters of the petition wanted the U.S. leadership to understand that Algerians were shocked by U.S. weapons deliveries to Israel and very frustrated by a U.S. response that was perceived in Algeria as inconsistent with U.S. support for freedom, democracy, and human rights.

U.S. SEEKS DURABLE PEACE; NOT RETURN TO STATUS QUO

¶3. Charge thanked the delegation for coming and said the Embassy appreciated receiving the views of civil society. Charge noted that we understood the GOA position in favor of an immediate cease-fire from the media but, for whatever reason, the Embassy had not been called to the MFA for a face-to-face exchange of views on the current situation in Lebanon. Charge said he would be pleased to transmit the concerns of the Algerian people represented in this meeting to the Department of State and the White House. Charge noted that Secretary Rice had just arrived in Beirut for meetings with Lebanese officials and would later travel to Israel and the Palestinian Authority for meetings with Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas. The Secretary looked forward to discussing with representatives of the international community a way out of the current situation, but the U.S. sought a cease-fire as a platform for a durable peace and not as a return to the status quo.

¶4. Charge said Hizballah had attacked Israel from southern Lebanon without direct cause. Noting that Israel had withdrawn fully from Lebanon in 2000 based on borders established by the UN, any Hizballah attacks following Israel's withdrawal could not be termed "resistance." Lebanon had yet to implement UNSC Resolution 1559 calling for Hizballah to disarm and the Lebanese Army to deploy to the southern border. Even though Hizballah was part of the Lebanese political system, it could not usurp the role of the Lebanese Government and plunge Lebanon and its people into war. The U.S. regretted very much the loss of innocent life in Lebanon, especially the lives of children. Charge then provided the delegation with English-language copies of the G-8 leaders' statement from their recent meetings in St. Petersburg on the situation. Charge pointed out that the G-8 held Hizballah responsible as the cause of the current conflict but sought a durable solution to bring peace and security to the region over the longer term.

ALGERIANS OPPOSE ISLAMIC-INSPIRED VIOLENCE;
ISRAELI OVER-REACTION FUELING SUPPORT FOR TERRORISM

¶5. Yahoui offered that the principal problem was the disproportionate response of Israel. Algerians understood that Hizballah was a terrorist group whose motives were not pure. Algerians did not support Hizballah and opposed Islamist-inspired violence. What concerned Algerians most, said Kouadri, was the potential for Arab youth to become radicalized and more supportive of terrorist violence because of Israel's over-reaction. That over-reaction was fueling support for terrorists, especially among the young. The Algerians also wanted the U.S. not to forget about UNSCR 242, which seemed no longer to be a U.S. priority. Charge responded that we wanted to stop the violence and promote a better life for people of the region based on the precepts of

UNSCR 242 and land for peace. Charge said progress toward a lasting settlement was complicated by the actions of non-state actors such as Hizballah. If Israel is to be enticed to withdraw from territory, the abandoned territory cannot serve as a launching pad for more attacks.

KEEPING THE DIALOGUE GOING

¶6. The Algerian interlocutors closed by reminding Charge their intent was to be frank and sincere and that they meant no disrespect to the U.S. In response, Charge said we welcomed the opinions of civil society. This was a basic tenet of democracy and one that the U.S. promoted in the region and elsewhere. Referring to the progress in advancing U.S.-Algerian relations over the past three years under Ambassador Erdman, Charge said he hoped the progress would continue. He reiterated his intent to transmit the message to Washington officials and the U.S. desire for a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace in the region.

SIEVERS